

The Tobacco Observer

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Empty Packs . . . Empty Promises

WASHINGTON, D.C.—What has been termed a "cruel hoax" struck recently at the home of a Tobacco Institute executive.

In it is a lesson.

The wife of an Institute senior vice president began collecting empty cigarette packs, at the request of a friend. The packs, she was told, would be traded for a wheelchair.

The effort to save empty cigarette packs for a charitable purpose is in vain.

Typically, word spreads that some numbers of packs will help provide such things as a dialysis machine for a kidney patient, open-heart surgery for a child, or an iron lung for a polio victim.

Cigarette companies have for many years made sizable contributions to health research, education, and other philanthropic causes, both nationally and in their own communities.

But none of this involves redemption

of empty packs.

The late Joan Crawford, in a series of radio announcements for a charity cause, once termed reports like the empty cigarette pack rumor a "cruel hoax" which results in "heartbreak and anger."

In a recent example, reported by Associated Press, a Florida woman collected two grocery sacks full of cigarette packs after hearing that they would help pay for kidney dialysis.

William Kloepfer Jr., a senior vice president at TI, told AP that "there is absolutely no basis for this rumor."

The collecting of otherwise useless items by Americans in well-meaning but futile efforts has also included rings from beverage can tops and even tea bags.

"There is just no truth to this heart-breaking rumor," as Joan Crawford said.



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